Public Health Issue Management System
Fact Sheet

What is the Public Health Issue Management System:

The Public Health Issue Management System (PHIMS) is being developed to provide a standard method for local health jurisdictions to conduct case investigations and perform case management of notifiable condition events at the community level. The system is being designed and developed under contract with Olympic Consulting Group and in cooperation with epidemiology and information services staff from DOH and from local health jurisdictions across the state. Use of PHIMS by local health agencies will be optional, but a majority of such agencies have expressed interest in having a common case management tool.

Based originally on a case management application developed by the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Department, PHIMS will utilize internet technology to allow local health departments to conduct case investigations from the community by accessing a centralized database through secure technologies developed in conjunction with the Perimeter Security Project, Public Key Infrastructure, and the Health Alert Network.

Phase I of the PHIMS Project is designed to allow the project to proceed in three distinct parts: Requirements Analysis, Design, and Construction. An enhanced prototype has been developed and a contract to complete transition the prototype to a production-level system will be executed during November, 2002. It is anticipated that version 1.0 of PHIMS will begin deployment in late Spring, 2003.

Why does Washington Need PHIMS:

PHIMS will allow a higher level of data quality and consistency across local health jurisdictions. PHIMS will enable front-line local health case investigators to collect case information in a standard format and electronically report confirmed cases to the state Department of Health in accordance with the Notifiable Conditions regulations (WAC 246-101). This reporting capability can be triggered manually or automatically, which will reduce the time and effort surrounding the reporting functions.

PHIMS will also serve as an integrated component in the overall WEDSS architecture. The Electronic Laboratory-based Reporting System will initially populate PHIMS with new case information to investigate. Cases that are confirmed within PHIMS will automatically populate the Disease Condition Database.

How Does PHIMS Work:

Local health jurisdiction managers will authorize their staff as PHIMS users with specific roles such as: case investigator. Authorized users will obtain a digital certificate token that uniquely identifies them to PHIMS security. Users will connect to PHIMS via a standard Internet browser and their token to access the Washington State secure portal, which will validate their identity and connect them to the PHIMS application. Then, based upon their PHIMS role and privileges, they can utilize the features of the application for case management and reporting. Normally a user will be allowed to access data for their local health jurisdiction, unless granted access to a specific case for a different local health jurisdiction. The PHIMS system will provide for two major paths for case reporting. The authorized users can specifically trigger a confirmed case to report to the state or PHIMS will automatically report unconfirmed cases in compliance with the time triggers in the notifiable disease regulation. When necessary authorized users will be able to download to their PC data from the PHIMS datastore for desktop analysis and report generation.

The PHIMS application will ensure that data is captured and coded in a standard format that is compatible with the DOH and CDC NEDSS standards. This ensures that the case data that is passed to the DCD will be of a uniformly high quality and consistency. This will provide state epidemiologists with accurate and timely data for retrospective study and disease outbreak detection. Due to the web architecture of the PHIMS application new features and versions will be available as soon as they are installed on the PHIMS servers thus reducing the time and cost of deploying software changes. This architecture reduces the need for local expertise in installation and maintenance.